DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 421 824 EC 306 583

AUTHOR	Kaye, H. Stephen
TITLE	Is the Status of People with Disabilities Improving?
INSTITUTION	California Univ., San Francisco. Disability Statistics Center.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-03-00
NOTE	5p.
CONTRACT	H133B30002
AVAILABLE FROM	U.S. Department of Education, OSERS/NIDRR, Room 3431, FB6, Washington, DC 20202; telephone: 202-205-5633; TDD: 800-877-8339; World Wide Web: http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/NIDRR.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Research (143)
JOURNAL CIT	Disability Statistics Abstract; n21 May 1998
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Accessibility (for Disabled); Adults; *Disabilities; Disability Discrimination; *Employment Statistics; *Income; National Surveys; *Social Life; *Well Being
IDENTIFIERS	Americans with Disabilities Act 1990

ABSTRACT

This report discusses the findings of national surveys that show little evidence of improvement in the economic well-being of Americans with disabilities. Positive and negative findings include: (1) the labor force participation rate for people with disabilities aged 18-64 remained more or less constant, at about 52 percent between 1990 and 1994; (2) the employment rate of people aged 16-64 with work disabilities was also steady at 28 or 29 percent for 1990-1995; (3) four-fifths of employers polled said that they had made accommodations for workers with disabilities, up from 51 percent in 1986; (4) people aged 21-64 with severe functional limitations had an employment rate of 27.6 percent in late 1991 and that rate had risen to 32.2 percent by late 1994; (5) earnings remain significantly lower for workers with disabilities than typical workers; (6) in 1989, 28.9 percent of working-age adults limited in their ability to work lived in poverty and in 1994 the poverty rate was 30 percent; (7) 75 percent of people with disabilities polled said access to buildings has improved since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act; and (8) findings indicate that the social participation of people with disabilities remains low. (CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

EC

14962

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 421 824

Disability Statistics Abstract

May 1998 / Number 21

Is the Status of People with Disabilities Improving?

by H. Stephen Kaye

In a 1994 Harris poll of Americans with disabilities,[1] 63 percent of respondents said that the quality of life had improved for people with disabilities during the previous 4 years. Certainly, the 1990 passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has resulted in a much greater awareness of disability and of the barriers that prevent many people with disabilities from participating fully in American society. But statistical evidence for real improvements in the lives of those with disabilities—more opportunities for employment and improved economic status, greater freedom of movement and ease of access, and increased levels of social integration—has been slow to materialize.

Disability Watch, a compendium of data on the status of Americans with disabilities from Disability Rights Advocates and the Disability Statistics Center, offers some good news, as well as ample evidence that further efforts are needed. Recent hints of a possible upturn in employment levels for people with severe disabilities are countered by other data showing a widening gap in income levels for those with disability compared to those without. While there are indications that many barriers in the built environment have been removed, improving accessibility of public buildings and some transportation systems, many problem areas remain. And low levels of participation in social, cultural, and commercial activities do not seem to have increased measurably since the ADA became law.

National surveys show little evidence of improvement in the economic well-being of Americans with disabilities.

Employment

Four-fifths (81 percent) of employers responding to a 1995 Harris poll[2] said that they had made accommodations for workers with disabilities, up from half (51 percent) in 1986. But if employers are making greater efforts to provide job opportunities for people with disabilities, national surveys still do not conclusively show increased levels of employment.

Figure 1 shows the trend in employment and labor force participation rates for working-age adults with disabilities from three national surveys. Two surveys reveal no significant trends: The labor force participation rate for people aged 18–64 limited in activity due to chronic health conditions or impairments, obtained from an analysis of the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS),[3] remained more or less constant at about 52 percent between 1990 and 1994; this figure includes those who are either working or actively looking for work. The employment rate of people aged 16–64 with work disabilities (a limitation in the ability to work associated with a chronic health condition or impairment) was also steady, at 28 or 29 percent; these data come from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS)[4] for 1990 through 1995.

The one survey that does show a statistically significant increase is the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP),[5] but for only one of two measures: People aged 21–64 with severe functional limitations (such as an inability to climb a flight of stairs without resting,

DSC
Disability Statistics Center
University of California, San Francisco

Published by U.S. Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR).

EC 306 S 83

hear normal conversation, or see words and letters) had an employment rate of 27.6 percent in late 1991, but that rate had risen to 32.2 percent by late 1994. On the other hand, people with any degree of functional limitation had a 48.6 percent employment rate in both 1991 and 1994.

Income

Partly because people with disabilities are more likely to hold part-time jobs, their earnings are lower than those of their non-disabled peers. In 1995, working men with disabilities earned on average only 72.1 percent of the amount non-disabled men earned annually, according to data from the SIPP, while working women with disabilities made 72.6 percent as much as those without disabilities. But even among people employed full time during the entire year, earnings levels are significantly lower for workers with disabilities. Median monthly income for men with work disabilities averaged $1,880 in 1995—20 percent less than the $2,356 earned by their counterparts without disabilities; women with disabilities earned $1,511 monthly, or 13 percent less than the $1,737 figure for non-disabled women.

As Figure 2 shows, this gap in earnings has not narrowed in recent years. For men, in fact, it has widened considerably. According to data from the SIPP, men with work disabilities who had steady, full-time jobs earned 85 percent of the amount their non-disabled counterparts earned in 1984, compared to only 80 percent in 1995. Women with work disabilities earned 85 percent in 1984, compared to 87 percent in 1995.

Despite improvements in accessibility, levels of participation in social, cultural, and commercial activities have not increased measurably.

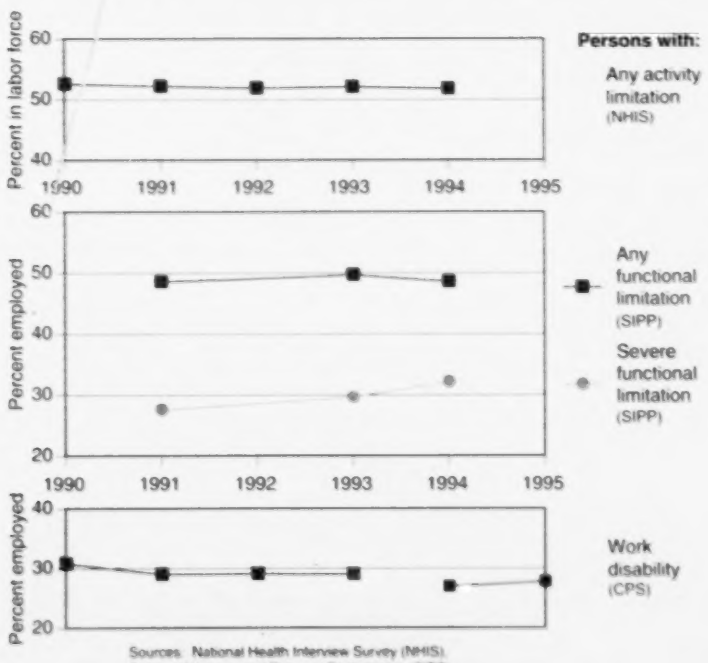
All in all, data from the CPS show no improvement in the economic well-being of Americans with disabilities. In 1989, 28.9 percent of working-age adults limited in their ability to work lived in poverty; in 1994, the poverty rate was more or less the same, at 30.0 percent.

Barriers

Physical and communication barriers can limit access by people with disabilities to public buildings, sidewalks, and transportation systems, buf it is easy to find evidence that many of these barriers are being removed: Some 12,728 small businesses claimed a tax credit for "disabled access" in 1993;[6] the credit applies to removal of architectural barriers, hiring signers for hearing-impaired customers, and printing documents in Braille or large type or making them available on cassette. Public transportation systems have become more accessible to riders with mobility or sensory impairments; the U.S. Department of Transportation's estimate that 55 to 60 percent of public transit buses are wheelchair accessible is a twofold increase over the 24 percent that were accessible in 1985. And, on a subjective level, 75 percent of people with disabilities interviewed in a 1994 Harris poll said that access to restaurants, theaters, stores, and museums had improved since the passage of the ADA.

Despite these clear signs of progress, a great many barriers continue to impede the full social participation of people with disabilities. One-quarter (24 percent) of the respondents to the '94 Harris poll said that access to public buildings

Figure 1:
Employment trends among people with disabilities, 1990–95.



Sources: National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)
Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)
Current Population Survey (CPS)
Note: 1994–5 CPS data not directly comparable with prior years

was a problem for them. Some modes of transportation, such as intercity buses and the New York subway system, remain almost totally inaccessible to those limited in mobility; air travel can be partially accessible or completely inaccessible, depending on the type of plane and the presence or absence of a jetway. And only a tiny fraction (2.9 percent, according to 1990 data from the NHIS) of Americans live in homes with any accessibility features,[7] such as ramps, extra-wide doors, elevators, or stair lifts.

Social Participation

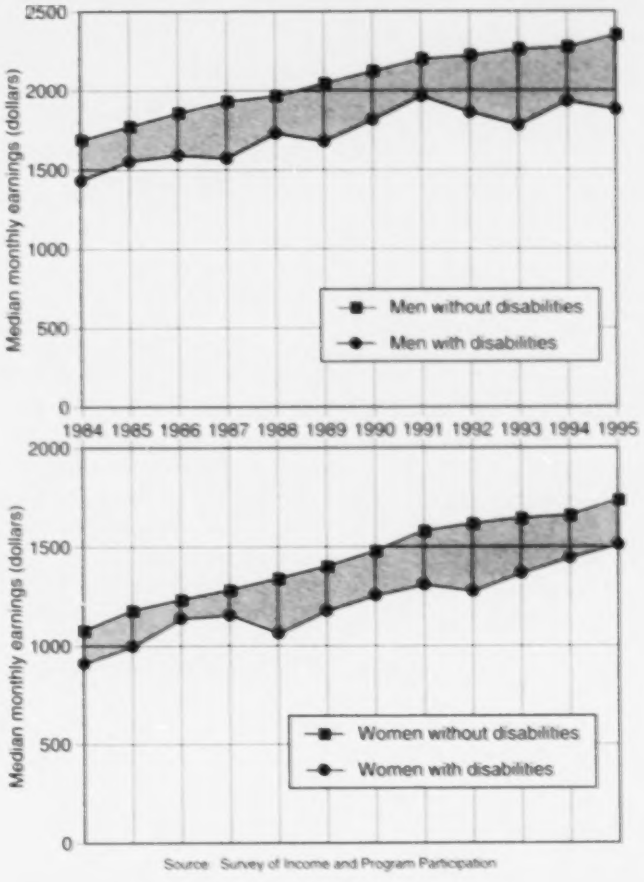
People with disabilities continue to live in relative social isolation. Among persons living in the community rather than in institutions, those with disabilities are twice as likely to live alone as those without disabilities (19.6 vs. 8.4 percent), according to data from the 1990 NHIS.[8] Half (51 percent) of the respondents to the '94 Harris poll of Americans with disabilities said that lack of a full social life was a problem for them.

Figure 3 shows the levels of participation in specific social, cultural, and commercial activities, according to the 1994 Harris poll. More than twice as many people with disabilities as those without (30 vs. 14 percent) socialize with close friends, relatives, or neighbors less often than once a week. Similarly, twice as many people with disabilities (58 vs. 29 percent) said they had not gone to see a movie in the previous year. Three-fourths hadn't attended a live music performance (76 percent, compared to 51 percent for those without disabilities), and two-thirds had not attended a sporting event (71 percent, vs. 43 percent for those without disabilities).

Two-thirds (65 percent) of people with disabilities go out to eat less often than once a week, compared to less than half (45 percent) of non-disabled people. Church attendance is lower for people with disabilities (49 percent attend at least once a month, compared to 59 percent for those with no disabilities). And, while almost all American adults without disabilities go food shopping at least once a week (85 percent), only just over half (56 percent) of those with disabilities do so.

Comparison with a similar 1986 poll shows no statistically significant change in levels of participation in the above activities. It is therefore clear that, by 1994, the ADA had yet to fulfill one of its principal goals, that of increasing the level of participation by people with disabilities in mainstream American society.

Figure 2:
Earnings for full-time workers aged 16–64, 1984–95.



Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation

Notes:

This abstract is based on: Kaye, H.S. (1998). *Disability Watch: The Status of People with Disabilities in the United States:* Disability Rights Advocates, Inc. Copies of this report can be obtained from Disability Rights Advocates at (510) 451-8644 or dralegal@aol.com

[1]All statistics from the 1994 and 1986 Harris polls come from: Leitman, R., Cooner, E., & Risher, P. (1994). *N.O.D/Harris Survey of Americans with Disabilities* (942003): Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., N.O.D.

[2]Harris, L. (1995). The *N.O.D./Harris Survey on Employment of People with Disabilities* (951401): Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., N.O.D.

[3]Labor force rates from the NHIS are derived from an analysis in: Trupin, L., Sebesta, D. S., Yelin, E., & LaPlante, M.P.

(1997). *Trends in Labor Force Participation Among Persons with Disabilities, 1983–1994* (Disability Statistics Report 10): U.S. Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

[4]Employment and poverty rates from the 1994 and 1995 CPS are derived from unpublished tabulations provided by John M. McNeil, U.S. Bureau of the Census. Employment rates from the 1990–93 CPS come from the *Poverty in the United States* series of reports published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

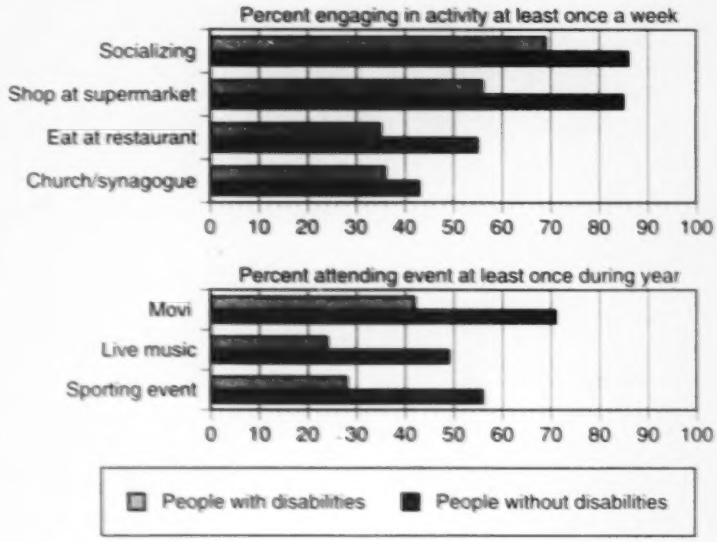
[5]Employment rates and monthly earnings figures from the SIPP come from unpublished tabulations provided by John M. McNeil, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

[6]Disabled Access Tax Credit statistics from the Internal Revenue Service were obtained from the Pacific Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center.

[7]LaPlante, M. P., Hendershot, G. E., & Moss, A. J. (1992). Assistive technology devices and home accessibility features: Prevalence, payment, needs, and trends. *Advance Data From Vital and Health Statistics* (217), 1-12.

[8]LaPlante, M. P., Carlson, D., Kaye, H. S., & Bradsher, J. E. (1996). *Families with Disabilities in the United States* (Disability Statistics Report 8): U.S. Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

Figure 3:
Rate of participation in social, cultural, and commercial activities.


Percent engaging in activity at least once a week
Socializing
Shop at supermarket
Eat at restaurant
Church/synagogue
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Percent attending event at least once during year
Movi
Live music
Sporting event
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
People with disabilities
People without disabilities

Source: 1994 N.O.D./Harris Survey

Credits

The Disability Statistics Abstract series is produced by the Disability Statistics Center, Institute for Health & Aging, School of Nursing, University of California, Box 0646, Laurel Heights, 3333 California St., San Francisco, CA 94143-0646, with funding from NIDRR. Worldwide web address: dsc.ucsf.edu

This report was prepared under ED grant #H133B30002. The views expressed herein are those of the grantee. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education is intended or should be inferred.

Availability

The full text of this public domain publication is available at the Department's home page at:
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/NIDRR/pubs.html

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternative format (e.g., Braille, large-print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request. For more information, please contact:
U.S. Department of Education
OSERS/NIDRR
Room 3431, FB6
Washington, DC 20202
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/NIDRR
E-mail: david_keer@ed.gov
Telephone: (202) 205-5633

Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, $300

Postage & Fees Paid U.S.
Department of Education
Permit No. G-17